

"Always an Airman": Enhancing the USAF Reserve's Continuum of Service

by

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“ALWAYS AN AIRMAN”: ENHANCING THE USAF RESERVE’S CONTINUUM OF SERVICE

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The momentum to strengthen the Continuum of Service concept within the Department of Defense and the services has steadily increased over the last ten years. Varying programs, initiatives, and processes have been created by each of the services, with the intent of easing a military member's transition through the different active, reserve and civilian duty statuses. The U.S. Air Force and U.S. Air Force Reserve have made great progress towards that end. Major initiatives involving the consolidation of personnel and pay systems within the U.S. Air Force, as well as the creation of websites that provide additional information regarding this concept are currently underway. However, there are other initiatives, led by the U.S. Army, Navy, and Marine Corps, as well as the private sector, which could be incorporated into the efforts led by the U.S. Air Force Reserve. This paper provides recommendations regarding some of these initiatives which the U.S. Air Force Reserve could implement, thus further enhancing the Continuum of Service construct within this component.

“ALWAYS AN AIRMAN”: ENHANCING THE USAF RESERVE’S CONTINUUM OF SERVICE

Another key link to maintaining the right mix of regular and reserve component Airmen is to make it easier to move in and out of active-duty status so our Airmen can serve our country, retain successful careers and still save taxpayers' money.¹

—General Norton Schwartz,
US Air Force Chief of Staff

Over the last several years, an effort which has continued to gain more attention both in the Department of Defense (DoD) and in the services involves the Continuum of Service (CoS) concept. Ideally, this human capital management process simplifies the way a Soldier, a Sailor, an Airman or a Marine serves if he chooses to transition among the active and reserve components, as well as civil service, during his career.² It also provides members additional options and more flexibility regarding how they can serve in different part-time and full-time capacities.

A robust CoS has positive strategic implications not only to the DoD, but to the nation as a whole. It helps reduce the tremendous cost of accessing and training new military personnel by recruiting them once and retaining them for life.³ So critical in an “all volunteer force” serving in tight budgetary times, a strong CoS system helps the DoD retain personnel who have a desire to remain in uniform, which in-turn allows the military to retain valuable skill sets gained not only through military service, but civilian experience as well. This provides the nation with an even more capable, highly trained force that can be mobilized should the need arise, all at a reduced cost.

As the advantages of CoS become more apparent to senior leaders, momentum appears to be building. Reports such as the 2011 “Comprehensive Review of the

Future Role of the Reserve Component”, prepared by the Office of the Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Office of Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs, emphasized the need for the DoD and the services to complete their work on creating an effective CoS.⁴ Lt Gen Jack Stultz, the Chief of Army Reserve, recently wrote, “Establishing a CoS that enables Soldiers to meet the needs of serving their nation, their families, and their civilian careers is paramount.”⁵ Lt Gen Charles Stenner Jr., the Chief of Air Force Reserve, stated, “We are dedicated to identifying barriers and minimizing or eliminating them when possible.”⁶ With the upcoming force reductions and the force rebalancing efforts now underway, it is even more imperative that CoS is as robust as possible.

The United States Air Force (USAF) and the USAF Reserve have recognized the importance of an Airman’s career “life cycle” and how a strong CoS effort drastically improves retention and the overall quality of the force. To reduce some of the confusion regarding CoS, USAF Reserve recently launched a website which provides information on the benefits and requirements of the current part-time and full-time duty statuses.⁷ There are also long term efforts underway to integrate the three personnel management systems, as well as the financial pay process, to form the Air Force Integrated Personnel and Pay System. However, there are additional opportunities that could advance the USAF Reserve’s CoS effort even further. The intent of this strategic research paper is to do just that: identify programs, processes, concepts or modifications of current policy that could potentially improve the current USAF Reserve CoS effort. This will be accomplished by analyzing: 1) past USAF and USAF Reserve CoS initiatives; 2) CoS initiatives currently employed by the United States Army (USA),

United States Navy (USN), and United States Marine Corp (USMC) that could be incorporated into the USAF Reserve CoS; 3) programs from other foreign military organizations that manage CoS-type personnel systems; and 4) human resource programs at select corporations and companies in the private sector who utilize a CoS-type concept to manage their full-time and part-time work forces.

The Advent of CoS

The idea of a CoS is not new. However, the Department of Defense's (DoD) focus has greatly increased over the last ten years. From the "transformation" effort highlighted in the 2001 Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) to the 2006 QDR's actual discussion of CoS, all of the services, at varying degrees of effort, realize how critical CoS can be in maintaining a highly skilled, dependable force and have been making efforts to break down barriers and road blocks which hamper it. CoS, as defined by Department of Defense (DoD) Directive 1200.07, is:

Management policies supported by appropriate statutes, benefit and compensation options, and agreements that facilitate transparent movement, to the extent possible, of individuals between active military, reserve military, and civilian service. These management policies provide variable and flexible service options and levels of participation, and are consistent with DoD manpower requirements and each individual's ability to serve over the course of a lifetime of service.⁸

The simplest way to describe CoS may have been penned by VADM Dirk Debbink, the Chief of Navy Reserve, who wrote, "...a better analogy is that we're all on the same career highway, and during that career, we may wish to change lanes several times, moving from Active to Reserve and back."⁹ That career highway is now expanding, as DoD and some of the services are pushing even harder for a more "totally integrated" force. This advances the "free flow" of people shifting among the active, reserve and civilian statuses.¹⁰ However, for this to succeed, additional barriers

and roadblocks in the forms of law, policy, training, information systems, pay, culture and attitude have to change. This includes addressing the 30-plus duty statuses currently in existence, which make it cumbersome for leadership to effectively manage the force using the CoS construct.¹¹ Breaking through these obstacles will improve efficiencies, reduce training and recruiting costs, and produce a more seasoned and experienced force.

USAF and USAF Reserve's CoS

Though the USAF and USAF Reserve have done much in recent years regarding CoS, issues with the concept still exist. In the June-July 2010 edition of *The Officer*, Mr. David Smalls (Director of the Reserve Officers Association, Air Force Section) discussed the challenges of his transition from active duty to the reserve force. He experienced problems ranging from how he would receive his orders, to receiving his pay, to finalizing his performance report that was due.¹² Unfortunately, he is not alone. Another example involves an Airman in January 2012 who was having a difficult time transferring from his USAF Reserve Active Guard Reserve (AGR) position to an Air National Guard (ANG) AGR position. Ironically, though this Airman was in the ANG for fifteen years prior to transitioning to his four year USAF Reserve tour, he was essentially treated as a new accession.¹³ Frustrated, this Airman commented, "There has got to be a better way of transitioning."¹⁴

There are ways to improve CoS which are not necessarily brand new ideas. Currently, there are two options that the USAF Reserve has used sparingly in the past that could improve CoS efforts if fully utilized: *portability* and *convertibility*. *Portability* is "the ability for a Reservist to carry his status and all of the benefits accumulated in that status with him to a new position."¹⁵ *Convertibility* is "the ability of the command to

temporarily change a position from one status to another.”¹⁶ These tools are key if CoS is improved. For example, almost all of the USAF Reserve squadron commander positions are coded as either an Air Reserve Technician (ART) or a Traditional Reserve (TR) position, leaving very little in opportunities for AGR members.¹⁷ This is an issue since squadron command experience is critical if the member wants to be competitive for a promotion to Colonel. If an AGR wishes to fill one of these positions, he generally has to give up his status, which impacts both his current benefits and his retirement. Utilizing the *portability/convertibility* options, the AGR could be assigned to that ART/TR position while maintaining his AGR status. In theory, this provides a great amount of flexibility for USAF Reserve members. The practice, however, is rare, due in part to the needs of the USAF Reserve as well as the difficulties that exist within the CoS. As CoS continues to evolve, it is recommended that USAF Reserve leadership address the usage of these options, and when appropriate, increase their utilization.

There are also administrative options which could be implemented to improve CoS. One idea discussed in 2010 was to remove the “R” (representing Reserve) in the “USAFR” portion of a reserve member’s signature block.¹⁸ Unfortunately, to date, no action has been taken. The USN Reserve has already completed this action and removed that designation from their signature block.¹⁹ Though some may think this adjustment is trivial, having the “R” designation helps detract from the One Team, One Fight message CoS helps to convey. Another idea is to adjust the frequency of enlisted performance reports. Currently, though the USAF requires annual reviews for their regular component members, non-active duty reserve members are required to have them every two years. This is due, in part, to the limited amount of time that the

member actually serves in their military capacity. However, as members shift through the different duty statuses and senior enlisted members assume more responsibility and work load, this two year time period may not be effective in the management of the force. Therefore, to be more in-line with their active duty counterparts, it is recommended that for enlisted members, E-7 (Master Sergeant) to E-9 (Chief Master Sergeant), performance reports are completed at least annually. This change would impact the cultural differences that exist in this area.

There are several legislative items that should also be considered by USAF Reserve to support and advocate. In March 2010, the Reserve Officers' Association drafted a position paper that discussed revising the establishment of a "satisfactory year" of service when dealing with a non-regular retirement. Currently, the reservist must not only consider the fiscal year in scheduling his duty, but his "anniversary date/year" as well.²⁰ The proposal recommends "removing the artificial requirement of actively maintaining an anniversary year throughout the course of one's career."²¹ They proposed instead to place the requirement for any partial year of service to the end of a member's career.²² This effort not only supports the CoS initiative by simplifying how a member schedules his man-days and annual tour, but how he calculates his retirement.

There have been some recent changes involving how CoS initiatives are being managed by the USAF. Prior to the summer of 2011, the Air Staff in the Pentagon formed a separate team charged with working a range of CoS issues. Eventually, this office and its responsibilities were incorporated into another team called the "3-1 Initiative", whose mission is to develop a work plan to integrate the three USAF component personnel management systems into a single system.²³ The merger makes

sense, as the 3-1 Initiative impacts CoS programs and processes. However, there is a potential that because the 3-1 Initiative has such a large area of responsibility, there could be a slow-down in pushing for the implementation of specific CoS programs.

A casualty of the CoS and 3-1 Integration merger was the suspension of the “Air Force CoS Tracking Tool” website (<https://www.safmr.hq.af.mil>).²⁴ This very user-friendly site, still prominently advertised on several guard and reserve component websites, offered USAF members of all statuses the opportunity to provide recommendations and suggestions on potential CoS initiatives. It also allowed members to track the progress of their suggestions as the CoS team investigated their plausibility. It is recommended, when possible, that this site be re-activated, especially now as force structure changes and rebalancing efforts are underway and a larger portion of the force will be impacted.

Even with all of the effort and hard work USAF and USAF Reserve personnel have invested in CoS, additional culture change is needed. In the article, “Challenges of Implementing Transformation for Tomorrow’s Reserve”, the author discusses engaging members and improving their awareness of their role in the Total Force, which must happen first before changing their expectations of their service.²⁵ His premise is correct, and the USAF and USAF Reserve need to do a better job marketing this idea. It should start at the beginning of an Airman’s career, educating him to think past the initial period of his “service obligation” or enlistment and to consider the rewards of a lifelong career in the USAF.

Benchmarking Opportunities From Sister Service CoS Systems

Much like how USAF disbanded their CoS team (which, as highlighted above, was incorporated into the 3-1 Initiative) the U.S. Army G-1 personnel community did the

same with their CoS office. Currently, the work accomplished by the G-1's staff for CoS falls under their "efficiencies" effort. However, this has not hampered their push to improve the way Soldiers are impacted by CoS, as many initiatives are underway that the USAF Reserve should take note of.

One idea the Army G1 is reviewing is to eliminate the requirement of discharging a member and generating a DD Form 214 (Certificate from Release or Discharge from Active Duty) when he transfers from one Army component to another.²⁶ Instead, the member would simply just be issued orders to report to his new unit.

Another idea that's currently on the "drawing board" is to create an "Inactive Ready Reserve volunteer" status.²⁷ Normally, a Soldier (Sailors, Airmen and Marines as well) completes an eight-year service obligation. When that is finished, if they are in Individual Ready Reserve (IRR) status, they are asked to either leave the military permanently or continue on in the IRR with the potential to be deployed if necessary.²⁸ The USA Reserve proposes a third option: a volunteer status in the IRR.²⁹ This status would assign the Soldier to a unit located near them where they would go and support yearly musters, which are part of being a member in the IRR.³⁰ Regarding this possible option, Lt Gen Jack Stultz, Chief of the Army Reserve, recently stated, "The only way you can get called back is if you volunteer to come back...I know there are people out there that we could preserve in our force that we have invested in if we made it more flexible."³¹

Another program initiated in July 2011 is the IRR Affiliation Program, which allows IRR members and their families to "tap" into a support network should they need assistance from a readiness or welfare standpoint.³² These members are affiliated with

a selected Reserve unit who is responsible for providing that Soldier with assistance when needed.³³ There is no requirement for the Soldier to participate or even maintain contact with that unit.³⁴

In recent years, there has been a call for creating an Auxiliary Force or pursuing the concept of an IRR Direct Entry program. These ideas are an attempt to enlist members who have special skills or experience but do not quite fit in the active or reserve component.³⁵ An example of a successful IRR Direct Entry type program is the 09L Interpreter/Translator Program, which has been reasonably successful for the USA.³⁶ Its focus is to recruit heritage speakers of 21 priority languages, who are then directly assigned to the IRR.³⁷ They then attend basic military training and are mobilized for a period of active duty.³⁸ Upon completion of that duty, they could serve in a civil service capacity.³⁹ This concept could be considered as the USAF and USAF Reserve build expertise and experience for their cyberspace mission. Acquiring that type of talent takes time and those that are proficient in that realm may not want to serve in a traditional active or reserve component role. The option of this kind of organization, considered almost “military-lite,” may help alleviate some of these road blocks.

In addition to supporting the individual Soldier, the USA Reserve is also focused on supporting the family. One program, still in its infancy, is the “Army Strong Community Center.” Its purpose is to support geographically dispersed military members and their families who may not live close to an active military base.⁴⁰ These “virtual installations” are prepared to provide families with services, support and information that they would normally receive on a military installation.⁴¹ This could be

a great opportunity for the USAF Reserve (and Air National Guard as well) to either partner with the USA Reserve or create their own centers for Airmen and their families that are geographically distant from their home units.

Another strong program created by the USA Reserve involves the component's relationship with their members' employers. USA Reserve, in April 2008, spearheaded an effort to create an on-line "Employer Partnership Office."⁴² The Employer Partnership of the Armed Forces (<https://www.employerpartnership.org>) boasts on its website that it has already partnered with over 1,000 employers and advertises over 500,000 jobs.⁴³ After the member establishes an account, the website allows him to review, by zip code, opportunities in his area. Another benefit to this program is that the employers are "reserve friendly", interested in hiring both reserve members as well as veterans.⁴⁴ Employers gain by hiring highly skilled personnel who have already received work-related training in the Reserve. This is another program the USAF Reserve should partner with the USA Reserve as an additional opportunity to support reserve Airmen.

Finally, another recently implemented program is the Army National Guard's "Active First" enlistment initiative, where a prospective Soldier can enlist into the active component for up to 36 months before he returns to his home Guard unit to fulfill the remainder of his Selected Reserve commitment; this program will remain in effect in fiscal year 2012.⁴⁵ This is advantageous for the Guard, as they get a fully trained member that has regular component experience.

The future of CoS for the USA and the USA Reserve looks very positive. Upcoming efforts include the development of a web-based application to monitor and

catalog all COS-related opportunities. This will allow senior USA leaders to provide input and prioritization to more efficiently and effectively develop initiatives, policies, legislation, and resource allocation.⁴⁶ However, there is some concern within the ranks that the USA isn't moving fast enough because of the upcoming drawdown, especially since the Office of the Secretary of Defense Reserve Affairs, who has an implementation plan for CoS, has not established a timeline (as of November 2011).⁴⁷ With that said, based on the recent media information and the efforts of Lt Gen Stultz and the USA Reserve, the push for CoS improvement is strong, so it is doubtful that a slow-down will occur.

As far as the USN, great strides have been taken regarding CoS over the last several years. To facilitate the effort, a CoS Working Group (CoSWG), co-sponsored by the Chief of Naval Personnel and the Chief of Navy Reserve, was chartered in January 2011 to "facilitate the exchange and leverage of information, ideas, expertise and capabilities; share technological solutions and jointly participate in CoS planning efforts."⁴⁸ Currently, the CoSWG has over twenty initiatives in progress, with nine future initiatives currently under consideration.⁴⁹

The USN Reserve in particular has taken a very aggressive approach to CoS. One of their main goals is to transition a Sailor from one component to another (the USN does not have a Guard component) in 72 hours or less.⁵⁰ To assist them in this effort, the Navy created the Career Transition Office (CTO) in 2009. This office assists Sailors who wish to transition from the active to reserve component. Their goals include easing the transition for the member, decreasing transition processing times, reducing error rates, and increasing reserve affiliation among qualified members leaving the

active component.⁵¹ During the process, a CTO Transition Assistant contacts and advises transitioning Sailors about the benefits and opportunities available in the Navy Reserve as well as facilitates the transition process from beginning to end.⁵²

Two USN programs that have become quite popular are the Career Intermission Pilot Program (CIPP) and the Enlisted Early Career Transition Program (EECTP). The CIPP allows active duty Sailors to leave and join the IRR to pursue personal or professional endeavors that they couldn't otherwise accomplish while still on active duty.⁵³ Those that participate in this program do incur a 2 for 1 service obligation once they return to active duty.⁵⁴ The EECTP allows an active duty enlisted Sailor to join the Selected Reserve three to fifteen months prior to his End of Active Obligated Service.⁵⁵ Once approved, the member incurs a mandatory drilling reserve obligation equal to the remaining active portion of his current contract. The minimum obligation for the member is one year.⁵⁶

Another program the USN offers under the CoS banner includes the Perform-to-Serve (PTS) with Selected Reserve option. PTS started in 2003, providing Sailors a centralized reenlistment and extension reservation system.⁵⁷ This system allowed first-term Sailors the chance to reenlist and retrain in other career fields.⁵⁸ Then in 2009, the program was expanded with the Select Reserve option.⁵⁹ This now allows Sailors to apply for both active duty and reserve opportunities with the same application.⁶⁰

There are several initiatives the USN Reserve is currently pursuing. In particular, as discussed in *Ready Now: The Navy Reserve Strategic Plan – 2011*, the USN Reserve is crafting legislation that would allow for Abridged Work Schedules, allowing reserve component Sailors to do active component work on a part-time basis.⁶¹

In reviewing USMC Reserve programs, there are some options the USAF Reserve should also consider. First, for those members who are leaving active duty, the option of “associate duty” allows them to stay connected with the USMC. A Marine on Associate Duty drills with a reserve unit without formally joining the unit or getting paid, but it allows them a means of preserving status and readiness without incurring any obligations.⁶² If the member decides to become more formally involved in the Reserve, Associate Duty allows for an easy transition.

Prior to its cancelation in June 2011, the “Meritorious Commissioning Program” targeted Marines who: (1) were between the ages of 21-30; (2) had at least 75 semester hours of college coursework; (3) had an acceptance letter from a college with a Naval Reserve Officer’s Training Corps program; (4) and could complete their bachelor’s degree within 18 months.⁶³ If a Marine applied and was accepted, he would receive an assignment to the Officer Candidates School and would subsequently receive a commission in the USMC Reserve.⁶⁴ Unfortunately, due to a low number of applicants, the program was canceled. In addition, prior to July 2011, Marines accepted to a corresponding commissioning program would attend college and participate in a Naval Reserve Officers Training Corps program for one year before going to the USMC’s Officers Candidate School (OCS).⁶⁵ However, due to the school’s complexity, as it is considered the toughest hurdle in the whole processes, USMC decided that there were efficiencies if the applicant successfully complete OCS first and had an acceptance letter to his college of choice before receiving orders to go to school.⁶⁶ Capt Adam Scott, head of Regular Officer Programs, stated, “By getting it [OCS] out of the way right off the bat we’re making sure that the Marine Corps isn’t wasting time and money

sending someone to school who will eventually fail to make it through OCS.”⁶⁷

Depending on career field, the USAF Reserve could potentially review this program and modify it to meet the component’s needs.

Finally, in researching the USN and USA CoS programs, simple “Stay Navy” and “A Soldier for Life” slogans were consistently used in their CoS communications campaigns. These slogans permeated the articles, websites and other media used by both the USA and USN Reserve components to promote themselves and their CoS programs. Overall, these simple messages resonate with the CoS intent of keeping that member, in one status or another, throughout his entire career life cycle. Unfortunately, as far as the USAF Reserve, there is currently no slogan tied to their CoS effort.

Foreign Military CoS systems – A Universal Concern

The United States military is not the only force that has concerns with CoS. In fact, a multi-national conference is held biennially to address similar and emerging issues regarding reserve military forces. It is called the International Conference on Employer Support for Reserves (ICESR), and in 2011, was held in Canada and attended by countries such as Australia, Denmark, New Zealand, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and the United States.⁶⁸ Over the last three conferences, CoS was an agenda topic. Wing Commander (Dr.) Paul Earnshaw of the Australian Defence Force was one of the main researchers responsible for creating the questionnaires sent to each of the attending countries prior to the conferences and for consolidating and analyzing the results.⁶⁹ He found that the data reflected a large range of CoS interest. For example, Sweden did not see a need to invest many resources to their CoS initiatives since “this is not a hot topic right now.”⁷⁰ The United States was on the other end of that spectrum, with Australia and the United Kingdom (UK) not too far behind. In

fact, the UK is currently developing their New Employment Model (NEM).⁷¹ NEM's vision is to be "an employment model that delivers the required people component of Operational Capability that is affordable and supports the aspirations of Service Personnel."⁷² This program is essentially examining the same type of issues and requirements that our CoS is trying to address. There are five different project teams focusing on the different aspects of CoS, and by the fall of 2012, these teams will report their findings.⁷³ Recommendations will be forwarded to their "Defence Board", and if approved, implementation of the recommendations will start in 2014/2015, with some initiatives expected to take up to 10 years to fully implement.⁷⁴ The results of this effort could provide additional ideas and concepts for not only the USAF Reserve, but DoD, to consider.

How "Corporate America" Engages the "Part Time" Employee

Though no private sector human capital management model includes the complexity of a workforce like a reserve component, there are some key concepts regarding how the private sector manages their part-time and contingent employee force that the USAF Reserve should consider.⁷⁵ These points are critical to the success of CoS as it continues to expand and more Airmen have the ability to move among the different part-time and full-time duty statuses. The most important of these points include *mentorship*, *inclusiveness*, and *communication*.

During a recent webinar hosted by Jim Luckman and the Lean Enterprise Institute (LEI), the topic of Transformational Leadership and *mentorship* was discussed. LEI is a nonprofit organization that provides new methods for organizational transformation.⁷⁶ In this meeting, Mr. Luckman stated that, "there is an implied need for mentoring in a learning culture. Possibly, the best approach is to have a full-time

employee that is skilled in problem solving mentor a part-time employee.”⁷⁷ Barwalt Tool Company, a leader in the tile tool and material industry, agrees. They support assigning mentors to part-time employees because “the part-time person will feel more like a part of the team.”⁷⁸ Michael Riley, in his article “Keeping Part-Time Employees Motivated”, stated *mentorship* implies, “1) that their [part-time employees] progress makes a measureable difference; and 2) that they are viewed by management as being just as valuable as the rest of the team.”⁷⁹ Though *mentorship* is important at all levels and duty statuses, it is recommended that USAF Reserve consider assigning mentors to those Airmen trained in critically manned career fields who are in a Pretrained Individual Manpower (PIM), Individual Mobilization Augmentee (IMA) or Participating Individual Ready Reserve (PIRR) status.⁸⁰ This also loosely ties to what the USA Reserve is doing with their IRR Affiliation Program.

Another key theme identified by the private sector was the importance of *inclusiveness* in regards to their part-time work force. This directly impacts the overall culture of the organization, as full-time employees can at times treat part-time employees as “outsiders.”⁸¹ Those who don’t feel like they are part of the organization tend to have less motivation and become less productive.⁸² In fact, if reserve Airmen don’t feel like they are part of the unit and contributing to the mission, they tend to lose interest and, when their commitment is over, will not reenlist.

Finally, *communication* is absolutely critical in managing a part-time force. This ties in directly with *mentorship* and *inclusiveness*. An organization’s leadership must ensure that they stay in touch with their members and stay engaged. The importance on this issue can vary depending on duty status. Individual Mobilization Augmentees

(IMA) may find communication with their active duty unit more challenging than Traditional Reservists find with their reserve units. This is because IMAs are assigned to Regular AF component units and can sometimes be “forgotten” due to the high operations tempo these units are under. In addition, because the IMA is working directly for and with the Regular Component, he may not receive the information he needs from his Reserve counterparts. From all angles, as members transition through all of the different duty statuses, it is critical for the USAF Reserve to make every effort to ensure two-way communication channels are open and available to their Airmen. Finally, as difficult as it may be, USAF leadership, both active and reserve, who manage USAF Reserve Airmen, must take into account that when dealing with part-time staff, additional time will be needed to communicate, check and clarify issues.⁸³

Breaking Paradigms: Deloitte LLP’s “Mass Career Customization Model”

The DoD’s term “continuum of service” was not found to be linked with any major private sector corporation. However, the idea of workforce flexibility was a common theme. This flexibility covers everything from work schedules to career path “ladders.” One corporation that appears to have taken these concepts to the next level is Deloitte LLP, one of the “Big Four” accounting firms operating in the US⁸⁴ Deloitte’s 45,000 US professional have helped them earn accolades from *Fortune* and *BusinessWeek*, who consistently ranked their organization among the best places to work.⁸⁵

Deloitte LLP leadership saw that changes impacting their workforce and the talent pool they utilize were coming. They saw the need to restructure “both the expectations and the mechanics of how careers are built.”⁸⁶ This generated the Mass Career Customization (MCC) model, which modifies the current concept of the “corporate ladder” (going up or down in the organization) and creates the idea of the

“corporate lattice”, allowing the individual to move in many directions.⁸⁷ They see these corporate lattices as “living platforms for growth, with upward momentum visible along many paths.”⁸⁸ The model takes into account the changing requirements of the employees as well as the corporation across the time horizon.



Figure 1: Corporate Ladder vs. Corporate Lattice; Deloitte LLP⁸⁹

The MCC model identifies a definite set of options along four dimensions: Pace, Workload, Location/Schedule and Role.⁹⁰ In addition, there are trade-offs associated with these options, depending on the dimension. For example, in the Role dimension, the tradeoff scale has “Leader” on one side and “Individual Contributor” on the other. Depending where the employee is in his personal and professional life, he decides where he wants to be on the spectrum.

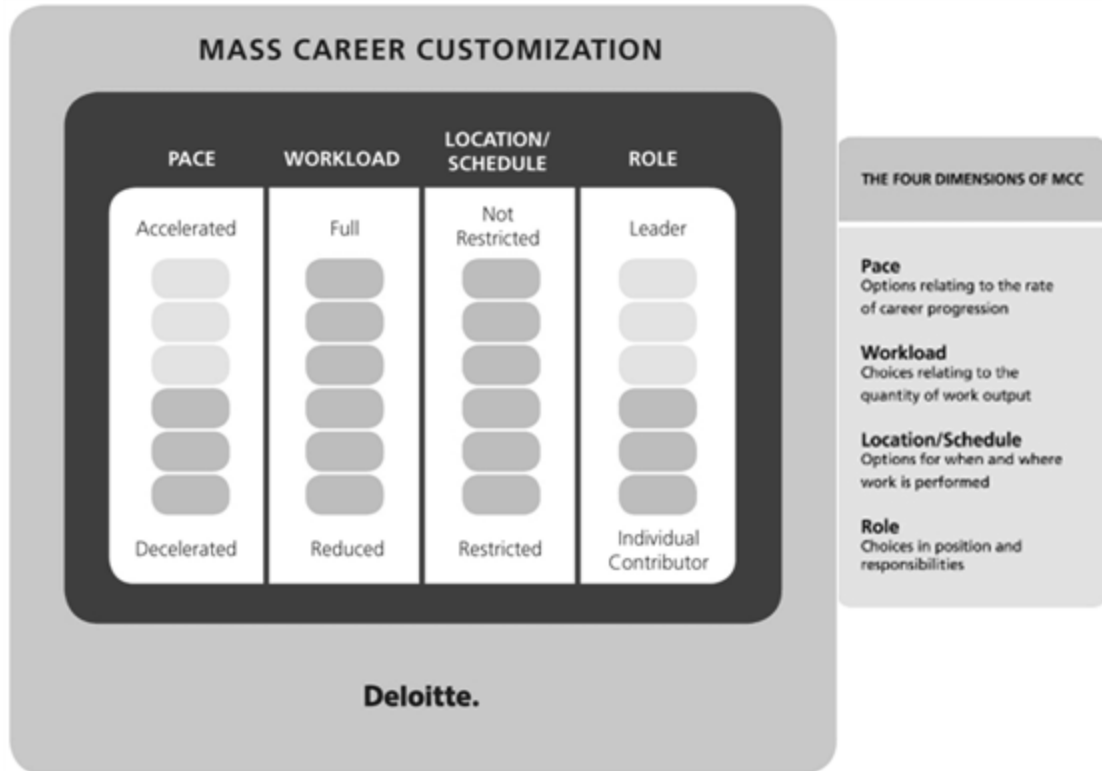


Figure 2. MCC model Dimensions and Trade-Offs⁹¹

Employees and their supervisors then customize their projected career path based on employee personal and professional needs, as well as the organization's needs and long term goals.

Deloitte has found that using the MCC Model generates a perceived “psychic benefit” for some of their employees since they feel the organization has provided options and a process that should they need to deviate from a full-time role, they can.⁹² This has created a “MCC option value”, which seems to generate a greater sense of loyalty from their employees.⁹³

The choices the employee makes over his career, as they use the model, create a path which resembles somewhat of a sine wave, representing the changes over time. This mirrors the same type of availability USAF Reserve Airmen have throughout their

career life cycle. There will be times during an Airman's career when he can support longer deployments, whereas there will also be times when, due to personal or professional commitments, he cannot.

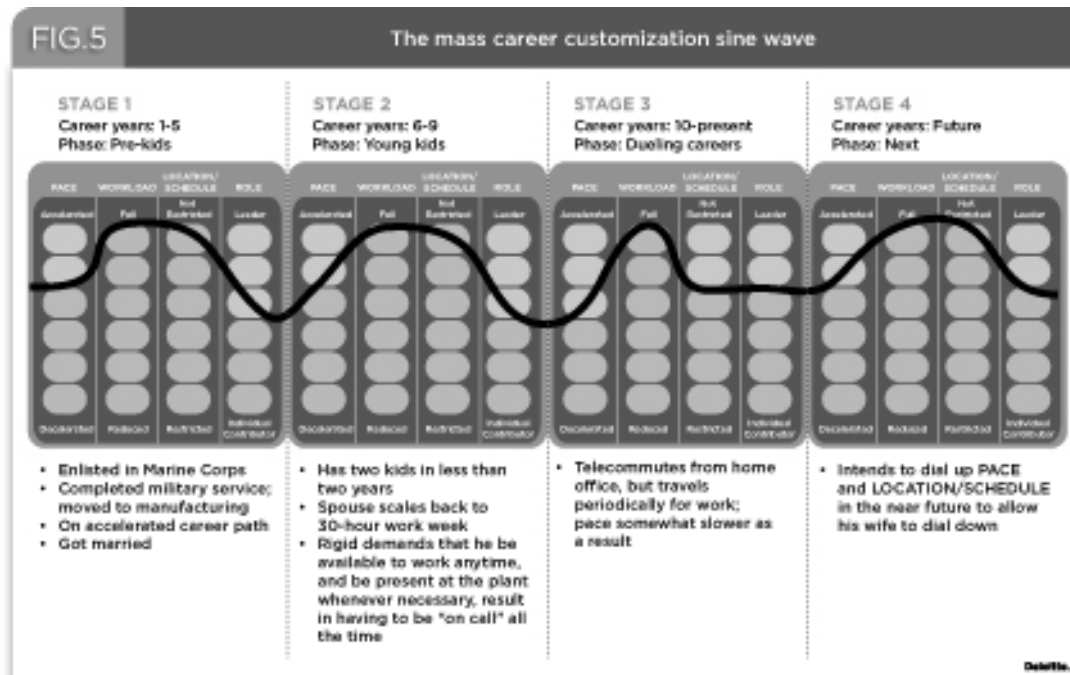


Figure 2. MCC model Sine Wave⁹⁴

Deloitte started this program in 2005, and in 2008, fully implemented it within their US organization.⁹⁵ With this program's employment, Deloitte leadership found no decline in client service and marked increases in employee productivity, while participants reported a better "career-life fit", saying MCC not only had a positive impact on their intent to stay with Deloitte, but it increased their willingness to refer others to work there as well.⁹⁶ However, to measure the model's true impact, Deloitte created a set of metrics to determine the overall program's effectiveness.⁹⁷ Many are watching to see if the initial positive trends will continue.

Overall, Deloitte feels that the lattice organization, supported by the MCC model, continuously correlates employees' talents, their career aspirations, and their evolving life circumstances.⁹⁸ They also feel this process takes on "the changing tempos of today's knowledge workers, offering a scalable solution to the enervating dilemmas in their search for work-life integration."⁹⁹ Simply put, MCC may cause the next evolution in corporate career management and planning.

The USAF Reserve should seriously consider adapting this type of model into the CoS process. Currently, the USAF creates a type of "career pyramid" for most career fields, highlighting the positions and grades officers and enlisted Airmen can expect to achieve as they progress through their career life cycle. Using a modified form of the MCC model would take that process to the next level, as it could incorporate the different duty statuses, as well as the availability reserve Airmen project to have over their careers.

Recommendations

This paper attempted to provide several current concepts, programs, and initiatives that should be considered by the USAF Reserve to strengthen the CoS concept. Key recommendations include:

- Modify the MCC model used by Deloitte LLP and apply its concepts in mapping an Airman's career life cycle.
- When and where feasible, increase the use of *portability/convertibility*.
- Support the initiatives regarding the calculation of a "satisfactory year", the simplification of member transfers between components, and concepts such as Abridged Work Schedules.

- Advocate for the restoration of the web-based Air Force CoS Tracking Tool.
- Determine if synergies could be built by partnering with the USA and USN Reserve regarding programs such as the Army Strong Community Center and the Employer Partnership Office.
- Adjust administrative processes, such as eliminating the “R” in the USAFR portion of a reserve member’s signature block and changing the frequency of enlisted performance appraisals so that the process is more in-line with the regular component.
- Enhance the current communications campaign, highlighting the tools and programs available, as well as updating members on the latest CoS initiatives currently under review. Also, consider including an appropriate slogan with the messaging.
- Monitor the CoS efforts of foreign militaries, such as the United Kingdom, to determine if benchmarking opportunities could exist.

Conclusion

In June 2011, outgoing Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs Dennis McCarthy wrote, “Skillful employment of the total force will be a mark of the 21st century military leader.”¹⁰⁰ Instituting a robust CoS system is essential to that leader’s success. Therefore, it is imperative that we break through the barriers and roadblocks and offer our Airmen flexibility with how they serve their country. This not only benefits the member, but the USAF and this nation as well.

This paper has highlighted several potential programs, initiatives, and opportunities the USAF Reserve should consider as they advance the CoS concept. This is not an easy endeavor. Law, policy and even service culture must continue to change if we expect CoS to reach its full potential. Every effort must be made to create a robust CoS system, because in the end, members need the tools and systems in place to support the idea of “Always an Airman.”

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